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THE SAVING GRACE OF MOZART

After the stroke, my grandmother, snug
in the nautilus of her own curled spine

would slow-stab violent gestures with the one
knitting needle she clenched on her good side

as she tried to talk—to whom?—
we knew she couldn't hear our answerings

even if we had been
there to answer.

We kept her alive, I think,
by leaving her chiefly alone

—scary, to get visited
by vaguely familiar giants—,

though once in a fit of benevolence
we squeezed into her humid room,

the four of us: my sister me
the one flute and the other.

How did we discover silver speech
would be the thing to reach

her remaining registers?
—as if disability

distills us to a purity
where only beauty reaches us

(we knew *we* weren't beautiful,
but the flutes, the flutes!).

The rest I guess we generate
of our own accord

the way, with the clear side of her bitter brain,
she once wove scratchy sweaters

that we still dutifully donned
on our quick summer visit . . .

But this once we stayed, we bobbed,
we played accurate Mozart,

the paired flutes shuttling back and forth to scale
the damp woof her dying left across the air,

scrambling to reach a high, sturdy dryness
they hoped would transport them once and for all

and maybe take her, too,
into the realm of the boy-genius

in punctual heaven—.